



NEWS RELEASE

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Clarifications from the Fresno County Department of Social Services Regarding Child Abuse Cases

In response to ongoing media coverage, the Fresno County Department of Social Services would like to provide the following important clarifications in regards to abuse allegations and investigations.

The Fresno County Department of Social Services is prohibited by law from disclosing or commenting on child abuse cases. Recent media disclosures may have caused confusion between what is a criminal investigation and what is a Child Welfare investigation.

The Department of Social Services Child Welfare staff are required to investigate allegations of abuse or neglect of children. Often times these investigations are conducted in tandem with law enforcement if the alleged abuse could possibly be considered a crime. Law enforcement evidentiary investigations are to determine if a crime has been committed. Suspected Child Abuse Reports received by Child Welfare are shared with the appropriate law enforcement agency regardless of whether a joint investigation occurred.

In the event of a child fatality, the Child Welfare investigation is conducted to determine whether the fatality was a result of abuse or neglect and if there is ongoing risk to any other children as a result. Once this determination has been made, the Child Welfare staff is required by law to take action to ensure that factors which may affect the ongoing safety of children are mitigated. Information of Child Fatalities or Near Fatalities are reported to the State of California, Department of Social Services. Public Disclosure of information when there is a reasonable suspicion that a child fatality was the result of abuse and neglect that is able to be disclosed:

- The age and gender of the child.
- The date of death.
- Whether the child was in foster care or in the home of his or her parent or guardian at the time of death.
- Whether an investigation is being conducted by a law enforcement agency or the county child welfare agency.

In this case, an eight-year-old male child died while in the home of his guardians and an investigation is being conducted by Child Welfare. Other than the two referrals referenced by the Fresno Police Department, there was no other Fresno County Child Welfare involvement with this family.

This information is provided to offer a better understanding and critical context of Child Welfare investigations to aid in current reporting. **Due to the sensitive and confidential nature of these investigations, DSS is unable to provide further comment or interviews regarding this matter.** Thank you for your understanding.

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